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PHILIPPINES

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

FISHERIES IMPROVED FOR SUSTAINABLE HARVEST (FISH)

BACKGROUND

Fisheries play a key role in the social and economic life of the Philippines – providing employment, essential nutrition and tourism enterprise opportunities for a rapidly expanding, predominantly coastal population. Yet numerous signs indicate that this valuable resource is threatened by overfishing, destructive and illegal fishing. Catch per unit effort has declined dramatically. The catches of small, subsistence fishers have dropped. This situation is largely due to the absence of rational national and local fisheries management policies and plans. This places marine fisheries and coastal resources under a de facto open access regime.

This open access is characterized by a lack of individual or community property rights and effective regulation. Degradation of habitats and depletion of fish stocks is due to the use of high volume, non-discriminatory commercial fishing methods, destructive fishing methods – cyanide for live fish trade, bottom trawling and dynamite, and lack of policies and programs geared toward sustainable use and the inability of responsible government agencies to effectively enforce fisheries-related laws. If this situation is not addressed, declining (and potentially crashing) fish stocks could lead to further biodiversity and economic losses, food insecurity, increased conflict over dwindling supplies of fish, deepening poverty, and a deteriorating quality of life for the fishing communities.

MORE INFO:

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Mechanism : Contract

Period Covered: Sept. 2003-Sept. 2008

PURPOSE

The primary purpose of the Fisheries Improved for Sustainable Harvest (FISH) Project is to conserve biological diversity in at least four biologically and economically



important marine ecosystems in the Philippines, as measured by an increase in fish stocks and the maintenance of selected coastal resources that support them with environmental services. The Project will accomplish this objective by improving the management of these fish stocks and environmental resources such as coral reefs and mangroves, which support them. The expected result is an increase in marine fish stocks by at least 10% from current baselines in targeted coastal and marine ecosystems within seven years, helping to achieve the Mission's strategic objective of protecting productive and life sustaining natural resources. The four target ecosystems are: the Calamianes Islands in Palawan; Danajon Reef in Bohol; and Tawi-Tawi and Surigao del Sur, both in Mindanao. The FISH Project will support the efforts of the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) and local government units (LGUs) to conserve biological biodiversity in the target areas.

ACTIVITIES

Technical assistance will: 1) strengthen the capability of local and national institutions to manage marine fish stocks and coastal resources; 2) improve national and local policies for sustainable fisheries; and 3) build the political will to advocate for more responsible management of marine fish stocks and coastal resources. Management interventions may include controls on issuance of fishing licenses, licensing of commercial vessels by LGUs, improved enforcement of municipal waters, establishment of marine protected areas and/or seasonal catch limits for selected species. In order to address the issue of open access to coastal resources and marine fish stocks, the project will support the development and enforcement of individual or common property resource use rights.



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